
TRAVELLER

THE PIRATES OF DRINAX

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Ihatei!

"Follow me, and we will win land for your sons and your son's sons. Follow me, and we will win glory! Follow me, and we will take the worlds of Humaniti and make them ours, now and until the stars fail!"

- Eihei the Clever

Ihatei! is the third adventure in the *Pirates of Drinax* campaign. If you are a player in this campaign, **STOP READING NOW!** If you're a Referee, then you should first read *The Pirates of Drinax Campaign* document to get an overview of the campaign.

This adventure takes place in the Tlaiowaha subsector of the Trojan Reach. The year is assumed to be 1105. The adventure begins on Drinax, or in a system nearby where the characters can be contacted by King Oleb.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Spies working for **Kasiyl of the Ahroay'if**, an Aslan exile in the court of the Floating Palace, report that a large number of Second Sons are gathering in an Aslan system only a short distance from Drinax. He suspects they are preparing for an invasion. King Oleb bids the characters enter Aslan space and find a way to ensure that the nascent Empire of Drinax is not crushed by an Aslan invasion fleet.

After crossing the border and evading or finding a way past any patrols, the characters arrive at Kteireo. There, they must somehow spy on the councils of the *Ihatei*, and prove themselves capable of surviving in the violent male-dominated camps. They learn that most of the second sons come from the *Htyowao*. For decades, the *Htyowao* and their rivals, the *Hkaaiheir*, have been locked in combat over the world of Keaih, nine parsecs rimward and deep in Hierate space. After multiple triumphs, the *Hkaaiheir* seem about to win the war, and *ihatei* who would normally go seeking glory under the banner of the

Htyowao are now turning their eyes elsewhere. The best way for the characters to preserve Drinax is to prolong the war...

The war on Keaih is what the Aslan call *tehlaicho*, a strictly limited war. Both sides agreed beforehand to limit themselves to set forces and set weapons – it is a continent-sized arena fight on a nearby planet called Akoaft, a duel between armies, and the *Hkaaiheir* are winning. The *Htyowao* could escalate the war, but it would cost them honour. If the characters can sabotage the limited war, though, the conflict could become a huge conflagration, drawing the *ihatei* back from the border.

The characters must then make a perilous journey into Aslan space to Keaih, and come up with a way to change the war for the worse...

Running The Adventure

Ihatei! is an adventure with a time limit – if the characters fail to resolve the threat of the *Ihatei* within 25 weeks, then the Aslan spill over the border and attack. 25 weeks might seem like plenty of time, but the characters find themselves jumping all over the subsector, and every week in jump space eats up more valuable time. The adventure is divided into five sections.

- **The Threat** briefs the characters on the situation, and gives them an introduction to Aslan culture. They must also decide whether or not to take Kasiyl with them.
- **Into the Hierate** brings the characters from Drinax to Kteireo.
- **Camp of the Ihatei** introduces the problem of the *Ihatei*, and explores the war for Keaih that is the source of the rising tide.
- Finally, **Escalation** challenges them to find a way to sabotage the Aslan war.

At each stage, the characters are absurdly outmatched – this adventure is about turning enemies against each other, about sneaking and bluffing and tricking their way past problems, not

Themes

Two intertwined themes run through this adventure.

The first is fear. At many points in the adventure, the characters face overwhelming odds. If they are the cowardly pirates they pretend to be, then they should turn and run. Play up the danger and the terror – have Aslan intimidate them, describe everything in the tones of a horror movie, and always ask the players about their planned escape routes.

The second is inevitability. There are no villains in this scenario (the closest is the arbiter Yae, but even exposing him will only temporarily delay the invasion). Everyone is driven by political or biological necessity. The Aslan *ihatei* are not moustache-twirling conquerors who fight for the sake of murder and carnage – they're slaves to their own cultural and biological need to own territory. There is no pat moral answer that will resolve the problems of this adventure; instead, the player characters must decide what they are willing to do to save Drinax.

about direct attacks. While there are a few scenes where pulling a gun (or a popping a dewclaw) is the right approach, most challenges call for lateral thinking.

1. THE THREAT

This adventure begins either when the characters return to the Floating Palace of Drinax, or when they receive word through secret channels (say, via the trader Sal Dancet) that King Oleb wants to speak with them. The matter is, apparently, of some urgency, and is sufficiently delicate that the King wants to speak with them in person instead of relaying his commands through holo-message.

Intruder Alert

As soon as the characters jump into the Drinax system, they receive a transmission from Lord Wrax of the Star Guard, the makeshift Drinaxi defence force. If this is the first time the characters have spoken to Lord Wrax, they find him condescending and unpleasant. Lord Wrax wanted the *Harrier* for his own flagship, and believes the king's whole plan to reunite the Empire under a pirate flag is doomed to failure. Wrax is of the opinion that the only good pirate is one crushed to a pulp in the gravity cells of the Floating Palace. He warns the characters that Wastelanders spotted Aslan raiding party consisting of at least three jump-capable ships on the far side of Drinax, and that ships approaching the Floating Palace may be attacked. Wrax adds scornfully that the characters should not 'turn tail and run like pirates usually do,' but should instead signal the Star Guard for assistance.

Wrax's intelligence is partially correct. Three Aslan ships did visit Drinax on a scouting mission. Two of these ships departed several hours ago, and jumped out before the pirates arrived. The last ship, a small scout, remained behind to spy on the Floating Palace. The Palace drifts through the skies of Drinax on its mighty grav-suspensors. Instead of trying to fly past the palace, the scouts decided to bury their ship and wait until the palace came to them. The Aslan ship has lain buried in the sands for weeks, watching the Star Guard ships fly past, waiting for the Floating Palace to approach.

If the characters attempt to detect the Aslan ships from orbit, call for Very Difficult (-4) Intelligence + Sensors rolls. If successful, the characters spot an Aslan *ihateisho*-class scout (see page 80 of *Alien Module 1: Aslan*) buried under glassy dunes some 200 kilometres north-east of the Floating Palace. Once the characters detect the ship, they can easily divert course to intercept it. The scout launches as soon as it is clear that the *Harrier* is en route to its hiding place.

If the characters fail to detect the ship, then the Aslan wait until the *Harrier* has docked with the Floating Palace before making their move. The characters can either secure their cargo, disconnect fuel lines and make other standard preparations before launching in pursuit, or else they can damn the metaphorical torpedoes and just blast off with their cargo bay doors still open, trailing fuel umbilicals and coolant lines behind them. If the players choose this option, have one of the crew roll a Very Difficult (-4) Intelligence + Mechanic check; if failed, then the *Harrier* takes one Internal Damage hit. If the check fails with an Effect of -4 or more, the *Harrier* takes one Internal Damage hit *and* an External Damage hit.

Chasing Down The Scout

A series of small explosive charges detonate, blasting the sand off the dorsal hull of the *ihateisho*. The little ship then lifts into the air and fires its thrusters, racing for orbit and the hundred-diameter jump limit.

The Aslan scout has Thrust 2; the *Harrier* has Thrust 5. Under normal circumstances, the scout would have little chance of escaping. In this case, though, the scout may have several advantages. Drinax's dust storms mean it is hard to fire on another ship while in atmosphere, and the *Harrier* may be out of position when the chase begins. The table below lists how many space combat turns it takes for the scout to escape.

Starting Position	Turns to Vacuum	Turns to Jump
Detected from orbit	10	(22) 15
Fast Launch from Palace	8	(20) 12
Slow Launch from Palace	6	(16) 10

Starting Position: Did the characters detect the buried scout from orbit, launch from the palace risking damage (Fast Launch),

or stow their cargo properly before departing (Slow Launch)?

Turns to Vacuum: How many turns it takes the scout (travelling at an acceleration of 2gs) to break atmosphere. The thick dust clouds of Drinax behave like a thick sand cloud, giving a -1 DM to all attack rolls and reducing the damage from beam weapons by 1d6. Furthermore, fighting in atmosphere is tricky – the referee may call for Pilot checks to cope with rising thermals or high winds.

Turns to Jump: How many turns it takes the scout to reach the jump limit. The value in brackets is the number of turns needed to reach minimum safe distance (640,000 kilometres). The value outside the brackets is the number of turns after which the Aslan decide that risking a catastrophic misjump is actually safer than hanging around to get pummelled by the *Harrier*.

The Scout Ship: The *ihateisho*-class scout (100 tons, Hull 2, Structure 2, no armour, triple pulse turret) is described fully on page 80 of *Alien Module 1: Aslan*. The crew on board have a DM of +2 for any combat-related rolls.

If the characters disable the scout before it breaks atmosphere, then King Oleb leads his Hawk Warriors (elite bodyguards equipped with grav belts) out of the Palace to board the disabled scout as it plummets towards the surface. The king's men are able to pull the scout out of its death dive and salvage it (see *The Scoutship* on page 5). If the scout is disabled after it breaks atmosphere, assume it is destroyed unless the player characters take special efforts to save it.

Lord Wrax's Star Guard show up too late to help intercept the scout. The player characters may take every opportunity to remind Lord Wrax of his tardiness.

Should the characters fail to stop the scout ship, it shows up again on Kteiroa – see page 7.

Word from the Hierate

King Oleb receives the characters in his private audience room. This 'private room' is the size of a gymnasium; magnificent architecture, awe-inspiring décor, titanic statues of previous kings and emperors, and the whole place is crammed with Oleb's personal items, like punching bags, boxing trophies, a half-assembled jetbike and a large collection of risqué paintings from the Lusty Phase of the Sindalian master-painter Thovair.

If the characters captured the Aslan scoutship, then the king is in a happy and boisterous mood. If the ship escaped or was destroyed, he is more morose and less willing to share his wine. Once the characters enter ("*shut the bloody door behind you! And turn on the godsrutted privacy field!*"), the King brings up a huge holographic map of the systems nearby. He points at the Aslan system of Kteiroa (Tlaiowaha/2125), and a series of holographic images pop out and circle around the planet. The

characters see thousands of Aslan warriors gathered in a huge camp; other images show hundreds of small ships in orbit.

"*Ihatei!*" says the King.

King Oleb explains that he has received troubling word from the Aslan Hierate via the exiled Aslan noble Kasiyl. Many *ihatei* – landless second-sons, eager to conquer territory for themselves – have gathered on the icy world of Kteiroa. If a strong leader emerges, he might lead the assembled hordes of *ihatei* and landless males on a wild attack on one of the worlds nearby. A really strong leader might even be able to convince the clans of the Hierate to lend their support to the invasion – and Drinax is only two parsecs away from Kteiroa.

Drinax is not yet strong enough to resist an invasion. Oleb wants the characters to head to Kteiroa and somehow deflect the invasion. They must either stop the Aslan from uniting under a leader, or give them a different target or... whatever. This sort of petty micromanaging is below the dignity of a king. The player characters are resourceful sorts – they can come up with something.

King Oleb cautions the characters that they must, of course, avoid implicating Drinax in any underhanded business or, well, war crimes or atrocities or thermonuclear explosions. He also suggests that the characters may wish to consult with Kasiyl – or they might not. So far, the exiled Aslan has proved relatively dependable, but his past is still a mystery, and King Oleb is loathe to trust the safety of the realm to him.

Kasiyl's Tale

The Aslan noble Kasiyl lives on a balcony on the edge of the Floating Palace – he dislikes being confined. He sleeps in a high-tech self-assembling tent. His gear is of excellent quality, but is travel-stained and poorly maintained. He certainly appears to be exactly what he claims to be; an exiled Aslan prince once of good family, but now a penniless beggar.

Kasiyl's history is explored fully in 8: *The Prodigal Outcast*; for now, he admits that he is an exile from the Hierate, and that if he returns to Aslan space he may draw the attention of the ruling clans, who will likely dispatch assassins to eliminate him. He still has friends in the Hierate, though, and it was his agents who warned King Oleb about the gathering *ihatei* on Kteiroa. There must be some reason for the sudden influx of lordless *ihatei*, some shift in the balance of power between the clans. Aslan politics are notoriously opaque to outsiders, and while Kasiyl was once high in the councils of the ruling *Athroay'if* clan, he is very out of touch.

If the players are unfamiliar with Aslan culture, then Kasiyl explains the nature of *ihatei* and their relationship to the clans. Aslan males are driven to possess territory. Nothing matters

more to them than owning *land*. It is a deep-rooted biological compulsion. Not every Aslan male is lucky enough to own land. Most territory is owned by the lords of the great clans, who then portion it out among their followers. Land passes from father to son, and most clans follow the tradition of primogeniture – the first son gets everything.

Ihatei – literally, second-sons – are males from wealthy families who did not inherit their family estates. They must therefore win territory some other way. Some *ihatei* fight against other Aslan clans, trying to take territory that is currently owned by another Aslan. Others travel out into space, looking for planets to colonise or conquer. Dangerous *ihatei* have the backing of their families, who provide ships, weapons and funding for their wars and expeditions. Such successful *ihatei* attract many followers, drawn from the ranks of both the other *ihatei* and the poorer, lower-class males who would not otherwise have an opportunity to fight for land.

These *ihatei* gather in huge camps. There, different *ihatei* propose different schemes for winning territory. One might advocate joining another clan's war as mercenaries. Another might suggest invading a lightly defended world, or striking out for unexplored worlds beyond the Hierate. Another might return from a long scouting expedition with word of likely targets.

Ihatei are wild and unpredictable. Much depends on the personality and goals of individual leaders. A charismatic *ihatei* can galvanise an otherwise disorganised and squabbling group of aggressive males, uniting them into an unexpected crusade. The clans tolerate a little troublemaking from *ihatei* warbands, but step in when things get out of hand. The problem, Kasiyl warns, is that a clan is as likely to endorse and support a successful *ihatei* invasion as they are to pull their wayward sons back. If an *ihatei* suggests attacking Drinax, and gets sufficient support to start an invasion, one of the clans may decide the gamble is worth it, and lend their strength and protection to the invasion. In human terms, it is the equivalent of a nation going to war because a gang of rowdy teenagers decided to invade a neighbouring country. *Ihatei* make diplomacy with the Hierate a minefield.

Kasiyl advises the following tactics:

- Stay undercover. The clans know that the *Ihatei* are a threat to the status quo that worries neighbouring systems, but the tradition of the landless conqueror is an ancient one. The Aslan will respond with terrible anger if they suspect the characters are meddling in the ways of the *ihatei*.
- The best cover identity for humans in the camp is that of a tinker. The Aslan identify gender very strongly with role, and only females may be technicians. As few females want to be surrounded by thousands of hyper-hormonal ultra-violent males, human techs are sometimes permitted to enter the camps to maintain the infrastructure.

- At the camps, look for agents of the various clans. While an *ihatei* warband might have members from many different Aslan clans and families, the more influential clans often have agents in place to influence the movements of the warbands. These agents are usually older, established males, but may be disguised as armed retainers of younger *ihatei*.
- Also look for the most successful and influential *ihatei*. It is these leaders who shape the future direction of the warbands – the characters must find those who might be planning to attack Drinax, and stop them.
- Kasiyl volunteers to accompany the characters as an interpreter. He also admits that he can provide an Aslan ship that will attract less attention than the *Harrier*. However, he demands payment for his assistance – he wants the promise that they will help him when he calls for it in the future (specifically, in 8: *The Prodigal Outcast*). If the characters take him with them, then they can use his ship (see *Kasiyl's Ship*). Sidebars marked Kasiyl's Advice describe the added benefits garnered by taking the Aslan. Of course, the characters also take on added problems (see *Assassins of the Yerlyaruwo*).

Kasiyl

Age 34, 5 Aslan terms

STR 9 DEX 9 END 10 INT 8 EDU 9 SOC 2 (was 12)

Diplomat 2, Tolerance 2, Carouse 0, Survival 1, Leadership 1, Admin 1, Advocate 2, Computers 1, Independence 2, Persuade 2, Streetwise 2, Social Science 0, Space Science 0, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Gunnery (turret) 0, Mechanic 1, Broker 1, Deception 1, Melee (claw) 2, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 2

Combat Vacc Suit (13), *Eahkyasear* long rifle (3d6-3)

Playing Kasiyl

- Reveal as little of yourself as possible. Your past must remain sealed.
- You've lived among humans long enough to understand their ways – including their natural fear of Aslan. Use that to your advantage.
- Spend a lot of time meditating. Suppress your emotions.

Prisoners of the Aslan

Chieftain Galx of the Vespexers (the wasteland survivors who live in the blasted wilderness below) arrives on the Floating Palace a day later. She confirms that her scouts say three Aslan ships, and gives King Oleb holomages of them. The characters can identify the ships as two *ihateisho* scouts, one of which is definitely the same scoutship that hid in the dune earlier. The third ship is a 300-ton Light Trader (*aoa'iw* class, see page 130



of *Alien Module 1: Aslan*) that has clearly been refitted with added weapons, suggesting that it is an *ihatei* raider.

Galx also reports that four Vespexers are missing. It is likely that the Aslan killed and then either buried or ate the bodies, but it is possible that they were taken as slaves. The Glorious Empire is best known for practising slavery, but the Hierate clans do sometimes use forced labour. If the characters reveal that they intend to head into the Hierate, Galx asks them to look for her missing tribesmen.

The Scoutship

If the *ihateisho* ship was captured semi-intact, then the characters may be able to have it repaired and use it for their voyage into the Hierate. The two crew (both young males) are both dead, and the ship's computer automatically wiped itself when the ship decided it was in danger of falling into enemy hands. However, a successful Difficult (-2) Intelligence + Computers check lets the characters access the ship's navigation computer. It came from Kteiroa, from the *ihatei* camp. Furthermore, searching the debris turns up a curiously ornate *Yuhaih*, a ceremonial battle-axe. Any character with Social Science recognises the significance of the weapon – *Yuhaih* are traditionally given to warriors by a liege lord or *ihatei* leader. The *Yuhaih* has a family crest on it. None of the human characters recognise the crest, but they can use it once they arrive at Kteiroa to identify which *ihatei* ordered the raid on Drinax.

If shown the weapon, Kasiyl guesses that the crest belongs to some upstart Outcast who is not part of the Hierate – the heraldry is not an established one.

Kasiyl's Ship

Alternatively, the characters can take Kasiyl's ship. His vessel, a 200-ton *Ktiyhui*-class Courier, is hidden in a hollow asteroid on the edge of the Drinax system. The vessel shows signs of considerable damage on its aft sections, suggesting it was attacked as it fled, but it has been fully repaired. The interior of the ship is luxurious, implying that Kasiyl was an Aslan of considerable territory before his exile.

2. INTO THE HIERATE

Once the characters are finished with their preparations, they can depart the Floating Palace and head into the Hierate... into the jaws of the Aslan!

Plotting a Course

Kteiroa is only two parsecs away from Drinax, so the characters can easily jump there directly. However, most human traffic into this part of the Hierate goes through Tyokh first, so if the characters want to avoid suspicion, they may wish to jump to Tyokh first and pass through immigration controls there.

Remember to subtract any time spent travelling from the 25-week time limit.

Assassins of the Yerlyaruiwo

Whenever the characters land on an Aslan planet with Kasiyl, roll two dice, subtracting the highest Streetwise skill among the characters as a –DM. If you throw 8+, then assassins from the *Yerlyaruiwo* clan spot Kasiyl and attempt to eliminate him. If the players take added precautions, such as modifying the ship's transponder or using Deception to disguise Kasiyl, the Referee may apply additional DMs.

These assassins follow the Aslan rules of engagement, and politely inform Kasiyl that he is marked for death before attacking. They might send him an electronic message, or have a courier deliver a letter, or broadcast a message to all ships in the system (relayed through a neutral comms satellite, of course – the assassins keep their own identities secret).

The *Yerlyaruiwo* assassins are all males equipped with specialised hunting gear. They consider the player characters to be retainers of Kasiyl and therefore valid targets. They avoid large-scale civilian casualties, but will use whatever weapons are best suited to the situation, from claws and knives to personal weapons to heavy energy weapons (if, for example, the players wander around in battle dress). The assassins have access to ships (*Ktiyhui*-class Couriers or *Hraye*-class Scouts), but will not engage their target in space combat (although they may attempt to board the player character's ship while in flight using grav belts and boarding vacc suits).

Assassins

Age 30, 4 Aslan terms

STR 10 DEX 9 END 10 INT 7 EDU 8 SOC 6

Melee (blade) 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Engineering 0, Deception 2, Athletics (coordination) 1, Gun Combat (energy pistol or rifles 2, Tactics (military) 1, Vacc Suit 2, Zero-G 1

Armour 13 (Combat Vacc Suit), Assassins' Blade (2d6+4), energy weapons as appropriate

Travelling in the Hierate

Unlike the Imperium, there is no single authority in the Hierate. Each clan patrols the space around its colony worlds and controls trade and traffic there. Human visitors from outside the Hierate can obtain papers of passage from the *Tliaowaha* clan on Tyokh, which allows them to bypass tedious immigration checkpoints and security scans in the space of any clan that has a trade agreement with the *Tliaowaha* (and virtually all clans have such an agreement).

Obtaining such papers requires visiting the Tyokh system and making a successful Social Standing + Admin check. If the characters arrive openly, then apply their negative pirate

Describing the Aslan

For the rest of this adventure, the characters travel through the worlds of the Aslan Hierate. To make these worlds seem different and alien, keep the following traits in mind when describing Aslan locations:

- The Aslan are *big*. The average height for an Aslan female is around two metres (6' 6"); an Aslan male can be up to 2.8 metres (9 feet) tall, and they are stronger, pound for pound, than humans. This makes Aslan equipment and furniture uncomfortable for humans, and may make the characters feel small, vulnerable or childlike.
- They are predators. This manifests in all sorts of ways – live animals are allowed to roam around their settlements (for when they want to hunt down a snack), buildings and gardens always have places to hide and spy, they use aggressive metaphors about hunting and killing much more so than humans. The characters should always feel like they're being watched.
- The Aslan are artists. Everything is decorated with glyphs, poems, or images of past heroes.
- Remember the Aslan attitude to gender. Males fight and rule; females manage and make. A female character who carries a gun or commands a ship may be seen as male by the Aslan, while a male human who runs a business or works as a technician is female in their eyes.

Standing as a DM. Remember that the *Pirates of Drinax* campaign starts at a pirate Standing of -5 with regards to the Hierate.

If they are in disguise, then they must make a successful Intelligence + Deception roll and either change the transponder on their ship or use another vessel. If the roll to obtain travel papers fails, the characters are delayed by a number of weeks equal to the absolute value of the Effect (for example, if the character fails with an Effect of -4, the characters are stuck on Tyokh for four weeks). If the roll fails with an Effect of -6 or more, the characters are either barred from entering Aslan space or are arrested.

If the characters do not have papers, then they must make a Social Standing + Admin check at every starport; if this check is failed, then the characters are delayed by a number of days equal to the absolute value of the Effect, and may be detained as above.

If the characters are in an Aslan vessel, they do not need to obtain travel papers or make Admin checks at each starport.

Piracy & The Aslan: Villainous player characters may wish to grab the occasional cargo while travelling in the Hierate.

The standard rules for piracy apply within the Hierate, with the following changes:

- Aslan ships commonly have higher Morale than those of the Imperium (when generating a ship's Morale score, treat any result of less than 3 as a 3).
- The Aslan have more combat-capable hunter ships that might respond to an attack. Add a +1DM when rolling on the Response table.
- While the various clans fiercely protect their own space, they are somewhat less likely to pursue pirates into systems controlled by another clan. If the pirates jump to another system controlled by a different clan, they are unlikely to be pursued.

Kteiroa System

Kteiroa is an arid iceworld with negligible resources, and is by far the most pleasant planet in the system. The other bodies in the system are still known by their old Sindalian names. From the greenish-yellow primary sun out, there is scorched Vansus, airless Meon, Kteiroa, the gas giant Bellopho and the rocky planets Vorca and Sonca. A small asteroid belt – exhausted centuries ago by Sindalian miners – orbits between Kteiroa and Bellopho.

Centuries ago, Kteiroa – then called Piper – was an outpost of the Empire of Sindal. The punitive wars that brought the empire down claimed Piper as an early casualty, when a Sindalian Star Guard warship bombed Pipertown from orbit. The six-kilometre wide crater still clicks with enough radioactivity to fry a traveller in a vacc suit.

The system is a backwater of such little importance that none of the clans ever bothered officially claiming it. The only world with valid territory in the eyes of the Aslan is Kteiroa itself, and there is little prestige to be had from claiming a few thousand square kilometres of barren, blast-scarred tundra. The only permanent inhabitants of Kteiroa are a family of Outcast, clanless Aslan who scrape a living by supplying the pirates, explorers and tramp traders who use this neutral world as a meeting place. Ever since the *ihatei* of this subsector adopted Kteiroa as a neutral campsite, the planet's economy has boomed. The Outcasts of the port therefore try to ensure that the *ihatei* gatherings go smoothly.

The *ihatei* camp lies some five kilometres north of the port.

The Starport

The old Sindalian starport still exists in a state of disrepair, but it is too close to the blast crater to use. The Aslan built a new starport on an icy plateau several dozens kilometres to the west. A network of ice caves extends to the south of the starport, where most of the 'ports amenities and accommodation modules are located. Bright landing lights warn ships not to land on the ice above the caves. The Outcasts are paranoid; they built huge

anti-aircraft guns at the same time they built their starport. Deep crevasses around the port contain concealed missile launchers.

As the characters approach the planet, an Aslan female named Utea hails them. Any ships heading for the *ihatei* camp can land there directly, and can contract with the starport's office for supplies. Other visitors must land at the port directly. If the characters are not in an Aslan ship, and do not claim to be tinkers, then Utea demands that they land at the port first.

Unlike most Aslan ports, Kteiroa is merely Suspicious (see *Pirates of Drinax Introduction*, page 16).

At the Port: Utea is an elderly Aslan who wears a thick fur coat against the cold. Her coat appears to be sewn together from the hides of at least three male Aslan; she laughingly refers to them as her former husbands. Landing fees at the port are high (Cr. 600) but facilities are surprisingly good for such a small port. The port has a large ice-cracking plant to produce hydrogen fuel slurry, and a pipeline carries fuel from the port caves to the *ihatei* camp. When the characters arrive, there are six other freighters landed, carrying food and other supplies for the camp. Business is booming here.

Any character with Streetwise can identify Kteiroa as a possible pirate Haven. The characters can upgrade the port through the following actions:

Attitude	Action Required
Suspicious	None
Neutral	Visit the planet, including the <i>ihatei</i> camp and leave without causing problems.
Tolerant	Spend Cr. 10,000 at the starport.
Friendly	Invest Cr. 100,000 in starport facilities.
Haven	Invest MCr10 in starport facilities.

Utea as an Ally: The longer that the *ihatei* remain camped on Kteiroa, the more money Utea makes. She therefore wants to prolong the debate, making her a potential ally for the characters' plans to sabotage the camp. She can suggest ways to prolong the *ihatei*'s deliberations, like shouting down the plans of the warleaders or rallying support for a hopeless candidate. She can also identify key people to talk to, like Fyukh and Teaw.

3. CAMP OF THE IHATEI

Walk out of the heated ice caves of Kteiroa starport and follow the well-beaten path north across the plateau. The cold wind howls, scouring you with ice flakes and the acrid fumes from the freighters' engines. Walk into the darkness of the icy world, and soon you see the lights of hundreds of campfires in a large bowl-shaped depression up ahead. The camp is a medley of

Kasiyl's Advice

Kasiyl suggests that the characters speak to the Outcasts who run the port; they know the movers and shakers in the *Ihatei* camp better than anyone, and may be open to bribery or some other form of underhanded dealing. The camps may look like chaotic gatherings of warriors, but they are the pressure release valve of Aslan society; leverage over a camp could help deflect the Aslan away from Drinax.

chaotic shapes, lit by leaping flames and the running lights of small starships half-buried in the ice. There is an encampment of a dozen pup tents, where young warriors roast some unidentifiable meat on a cooking spit. There, a brash young noble stands atop his starship, roaring a song of glory to the assembled camps. He promises to lead a war that will seize fifty worlds from the humans and take the Hierate to the very gates of Pax Rulin itself. Over there, four older warriors – veterans of a dozen campaigns apiece – laugh at the foolishness of the young noble from the comfort of their large tent. They wait for an *ihatei* lord with a more promising plan for conquest. Even though they know the young noble is a fool, his promises of territory stir their blood. There, a female technician – one of the few females in this male environment – fends off the unwanted amorous attention of a trio of warriors with a welding torch before turning back to repair a damaged suit of armour. And there, steam rises from the gutted corpse of a dying warrior. His victorious foe screams a cry of triumph and raises his bloody dewclaws to the uncaring grey skies above. That scene, especially, will be repeated time and time again in this camp until the warriors unite under an *ihatei* warleader.

Walk on, into the heart of the camp. Here is where the real power resides. Here are the established *ihatei*, the ones with the money and the backing and the tactical expertise to run a victorious campaign. Behind them, in the shadows, are older warriors and advisors whose braided manes and clan badges speak of the territory they already possess. They try to influence the leading *ihatei*, hoping to shape the violent potential of the mob into a form that benefits their clan.

If you are a female Aslan, then this is a dangerous place for you. This is a male place, a warrior's place. You cannot own territory, but neither are you driven mad by the instinct to conquer. The men here all carry weapons they do not understand, and shelter from the cold winds behind ships they cannot repair. They know only their dreams of conquest.

If you are a male Aslan, then this place stirs your blood, it sings to your very soul. Roars of challenge rise up in your throat. This place is the crucible of destiny – you will camp here until you find or form a warband, and then you will go forth and conquer land!

And if you're human – you shouldn't be here. Leave.

Events at the Camp

The Characters Arrive: The characters arrive on Kteiroa and explore the camp – see *Encounters*, below. The characters may also try *Gathering Intelligence*.

The First Night: Several *ihatei* try to win the support of the warriors in the camp, but the results are inconclusive. The Aslan Eihei and Elyo stand out as contenders.

The Warriors from Keaih: Over the course of the second day, more than fifty Aslan ships of varying sizes arrive and land at the camp. These are warriors from Keaih, mostly from the *Htyowao* clan, although some fly under the banner of their rivals, the *Hkaaiheir*. The characters can easily learn *The Tale of the War*.

The Second Night: Again, leading Aslan try to rally warriors to their banners. The influx of so many fresh warriors from the *Hyyowao* clan makes the *ihatei* warlord lykhi a deciding factor – most of the camp will go where he goes.

The Decision: Unless the characters intercede, lykhi joins with Eihei and plans to attack Drinax.

Encounters

The *Ihatei* camp is a cross between a battle of the bands, an election hustings (aka a stump speech), and a mercenary camp. There are more than 5,000 warriors camped here, and the characters count nearly a hundred ships. Most are *ihateisho* scouts, but there are bigger ships too, all the way up to *Sakhai*-class Assault Carriers massing 2,000 tons. Virtually everyone here is a male Aslan; around 5% are female techs, merchants or medics. The camp may look chaotic, and parts of it are indeed wild, but the ruling clans ensure that the hot-blooded young males do not get themselves killed too early by providing basic infrastructure and support.

At nightfall, the various *ihatei* shout out their plans for conquest in the hopes of acquiring sufficient warriors and backing to put their plans into action. So far, none of the notable *ihatei* have enough support, but hunting season only just began...

Roll two dice on the encounter table to determine what the characters encounter.

- Add or subtract a +1 DM on the tens dice before rolling if the characters are looking for a particular type of encounter. Encounters starting with a 1 are Violent; 2 indicate Opportunity; 3 suggests local Colour; 4 is for Rumours; 5 for the heart of the camp, and 6 for the notable *Ihatei* leaders.
- Add a +1 DM to the units die if Kasiyl is with the characters, or if they have some other assistance such as an Aslan player character, or another Aslan advisor.

Roll (d66)	Encounter
11 to 13	1d6+4 thuggish Aslan bravos harass or attack the players. The Aslan are drunk on hormones and Utea's homebrewed grog. They are armed with claws (1d6 damage) and pistols (3d6-3), and wear cloth armour (5).
14 to 15	1d6+1 Aslan veterans spot the players. Unless the characters can justify their presence (by claiming to be tinkers/ having an Aslan escort/a Diplomat check) the veterans try to drive them out of the camp. They pack snub pistols (3d6-3), shotguns (4d6) and wear <i>suya'uiyekhyerl</i> combat vacc suits (13).
16	An Aslan champion challenges the most dangerous player to a fight. The challenged player may choose to fight barehanded or to use any weapon of TL3 or less. The fight continues until one warrior cannot stand any longer. If the players accept and win, they gain a +2 DM on their next roll of the 10s die.
17	An Aslan warrior has a grudge against the Aslan ally, and tries to kill him. The warrior carries a Gauss rifle (4d6) and wears <i>suya'uiyekhyerl</i> combat vacc armour (13).
21-22	One of the larger tents is a gambling hall. The characters can bet on anything from which <i>ihatei</i> will get the most supporters tonight to dice and card games. As the Aslan males have little understanding of money, the characters can easily win money. Roll Intelligence + Gambling, and gain (or lose) money equal to the Effect x 100 Credits.
23	Some of the Aslan have skills that would suit a pirate's life. Roll 5+ to find crew worthy of recruitment.
24	<i>Ihatei</i> need weapons and other supplies. The characters may sell any of the following cargoes at twice the normal price: Advanced Weapons, Advanced Vehicles, Live Animals, Luxuries, Medical Supplies, Pharmaceuticals, Vehicles, Illegal Weapons, Illegal Drugs, Illegal Luxuries.
25	The characters find a wealthy <i>ihatei</i> who needs passage back to his clan's space. He offers Cr. 30,000 if the characters take him five parsecs to Oiwoiieaw (Tlaiowaha/0103).
26	An Aslan male mistakes the characters for tinkers and demands that they repair his ship. A successful Education + Mechanic test fixes the minor problem with the power distribution system; if they refuse to help, roll 1d6 and go to encounter 10+die roll result on this table (i.e. 11 to 16).
27	The Aslan ally meets an old family retainer, an elderly warrior who never won territory. He is clearly too old to survive another campaign. Do the characters stop this old servant from throwing away his life, or do they help him achieve his dream of territory.
31	A herd of shaggy aua (Aslan animals called hoofmeat) breaks out of a pen and bolts for freedom. The characters have to quickly jump out of the way or get trampled.
32	An Aslan bard recites tales of heroes from long ago. Any character who listens to these tales of the hero Saifiwil gains a +1DM to any Persuade rolls made against Aslan in the camp.
33	A human tinker repairs a damaged laser rifle belonging to a warrior. This tinker, a Solomani named Jarel Yean, comes from Vorito and is secretly a spy for the General Development Company.
34	The characters come upon a stall set up by the Outcast family who run the starport. Here, they can purchase fuel and other supplies, or meet with Utea.
35	A trio of veterans demonstrate combat techniques to young warriors. It is plain to see that the Aslan are natural warriors – the males may not understand the technicalities of their weapons, but that does not stop them using them to terrible effect.
36	The characters find the body of an Aslan warrior; anyone with Medic can tell he was poisoned. He wears the badge of the victorious <i>Hkaaiheir</i> clan.
37	The Aslan ally brings the characters into a sacred Aslan shrine where outsiders are not normally permitted. There, they meet an old priest named Stea who preaches at them about the importance of honour and territory. If they impress the priest with a Difficult (-2) Education + Persuade roll, he anoints them; this blessing allows the characters to speak at the nightly meeting (see Manipulating Events)
41-43	The characters hear The Tale of the War (all true, but roll 1d6 to determine who tells the story: 1-3: <i>Htyowao</i> (losing side), 4-5: Neutral, 6: <i>Hkaaiheir</i> (winning side))
44	The characters are told about the notable <i>Ihatei</i> and the notable retainers in the camp.
45	The <i>Htyowao</i> clan desperately need new territory to conquer, or they face dissent from within.
46	The <i>Hkaaiheir</i> clan intend to capitalise on their new power; once the war for Keaih is done, they intend to expand outside the Hierate (mostly false)
47	The characters' Aslan ally consults his contacts, and identifies Teaw as the most influential individual in the camp.

Roll (d66)	Encounter
51-52	The characters run into a wall of bodyguards and well-equipped retainers who will not let them past. Either roll Territory + Persuade to get past, or fight 1d6+4 armoured (15) Aslan veterans equipped with gauss rifles (4d6).
53	Party time! Roll Social Standing + Carouse; if successful, gain a number of +1DMs equal to the Effect of the roll to any Persuade attempts made in the camp.
54	Duel of honour – one character is challenged to a duel to first blood against an Aslan warrior. Roll a Very Difficult (-4) Dexterity + Melee test; if victorious, the character gains a number of +1DMs equal to the Effect of the roll to any Persuade attempts made in the camp.
56	The characters meet Teaw. The old Aslan sits in an ornate tent, surrounded by guards, assistants and supplicants. Recognising the characters as unusual visitors, he beckons them over to speak with him.
57	Fyukh spots the characters from atop his battered scoutship. If he recognises them as Drinaxi, he may try to flee. Otherwise, he guardedly meets with them.
61	Young Eihei the Clever holds court on board his 300-ton armed light trader. The ambitious Aslan has surveillance holos and intelligence on the defences of Drinax, purchased from Fyukh.
62	Eager Iykhi's court is in the middle of the large section of the camp dominated by the <i>Htyowao</i> warriors. Demoralised by their recent defeat, many of the warriors turn to drink and violence to lift their spirits. Getting to Iykhi is a dangerous prospect. Note that Iykhi arrives only after the event <i>The Warriors from Keaih</i> .
63	Brave Toiho of the <i>Hkaaiheir</i> arrives in a huge <i>Halaheike</i> -class pocket warship (1,200 tons), befitting his status. Toiho has plenty of financial support from his clan, but has few warriors sworn to him. He therefore welcomes visitors who might add to his prestige, even human ones. Note that Toiho arrives only after the event <i>The Warriors from Keaih</i> .
64	The veteran warrior Elyo holds court with a gang of other battle-scarred <i>ihatei</i> in the very centre of the camp. Elyo despises humans.
65-66	The characters come upon a council of leading <i>Ihatei</i> , and have the opportunity to <i>Manipulate Events</i> .
67	The characters' Aslan ally pulls in political favours, giving the characters a +1d6DM to their next Persuade roll.

Gathering Intelligence

If the characters captured or salvaged the Aslan scout ship (page 5), then a successful Intelligence + Investigate or Intelligence + Streetwise brings the characters to Fyukh. Otherwise, they must roll Intelligence + Investigate and consult the following table based on the Effect of the roll. Apply a +2 DM if the characters have an Aslan ally. Each roll takes 1-6 hours of work.

Effect	Result
-3 or less	The characters' unwelcome questions anger an Aslan warrior. He and 1d6+2 of his friends try to throw the characters out of the camp.
-1 or -2	The characters find nothing of use.
0	The characters learn The Tale of the War.
1-2	As 0, but the characters also learn the identities of the leading <i>Ihatei</i> .
3-4	As 1-2, but the characters also learn of Teaw.
5+	As 3-4, but the characters also learn of Fyukh.

The Tale of the War

The war between the *Htyowao* clan and their *Hkaaiheir* neighbours is key to this adventure, and the characters may hear many different accounts of the conflict. The basic facts are described below in a dry, neutral way – the Referee should add colour and verve to the descriptions when the characters hear the tale.

The Scout Ship

If the characters failed to capture the scout ship on Drinax, then they can find it in the *ihatei* camp. The pilot of the scout ship attempts to flee if they confront him, leading them on a frantic chase through the camp. Capturing him leads the characters to Fyukh.

- The *Hkaaiheir* and the *Htyowao* are both respectable clans within the Hierate. The *Hkaaiheir* are considerably more powerful, but the *Htyowao* are close allies with the major *Ahroay'if* trader clan who rule most of this subsector. Many centuries ago, they settled the water-world of Keaih together, and began a long-term engineering project to boil off some of the seas to thicken the atmosphere.
- The populations of both clans grew, and soon there was no unclaimed territory on the planet for the young males. The partnership between the clans broke down as neither side was willing to restrict their growth.
- Rather than fight on Keaih, where they might endanger the geo-engineering project, the two sides agreed to fight a proxy war on the nearby barren world of Akoaft. An arbiter (or, in the Aslan language, *earleatrais*) named Yae from the great *Khaukheairl* clan came to oversee the proxy war. Both sides agreed to deploy a strictly limited number of troops on the airless world, and that the clan with the last troops



left standing would win the war. The losing side would then have to cede its territory on Keaih.

- For nine years, the war was a stalemate, with neither side able to win an advantage. Under the initial rules of engagement, if the war failed to produce a clear victory within ten years, both clans were permitted to send in reinforcements.
- Then, six months ago, the *Hkaaiheir* somehow located the underground fortress of the *Htyowao* and destroyed it with a sneak attack. While the fighting continues to this day, the conclusion is obvious – the *Htyowao* are going to lose.
- Now, the landless warriors of the *Htyowao* must go out into the galaxy and find new territory, for there is no prospect of them inheriting or conquering land back home on Keaih.

The turning point in the war was the discovery of the *Htyowao* Fortress. The *Hkaaiheir* claim their scouts spotted tracks left by careless enemy patrols; the *Htyowao* suspect a breach of the rules, such as the use of orbital spy satellites. Some

even suggest that Yae, the supposedly neutral arbiter from the *Khaukheairl* secretly passed on the location of the base to break the stalemate in exchange for some bribe (the truth is that the *Hkaaiheir* got lucky, and a scout stumbled upon one of the entrances to the fortress).

Gaining an Audience

The leading *ihatei* – the ones the characters really need to talk to – are wealthy princelings from influential families. They are the ones with the power and backing to launch an invasion that might threaten Drinax. As landless Aslan, they have little or no Territory, but their families have lots of Territory and so they have a high Social Standing.

That means that the player characters cannot just walk up to, say, Eihei the Clever and talk to him about his plans to invade Drinax. All the leading *ihatei* have bodyguards, servants and courtiers to control access to them. To get to the *ihatei*, the characters can:

- **Beg for an audience:** Difficult (-2) Social Standing + Diplomat
 - Add a +1DM per Cr. 5,000 gift
- **Demand an audience:** Very Difficult (-4) Social Standing + Persuade
 - Add a +1DM per combat-ready character or ship in the players' party
- **Sneak in:** Very Difficult (-4) Dexterity + Stealth
 - Failure means the character is spotted and attacked.

Aslan & Politeness

Aslan – especially Aslan males, and especially *ihatei* – are touchy about being shown the proper respect and deference. Aslan society is a maze of subtle social cues and pitfalls that is almost impossible for an outsider to navigate without causing some level of offence (actually, that's true of any society, but in this case it's a society of eight-foot-tall predatory monsters with heavy weapons). If a character fails a social skill test while talking to an Aslan, there is a risk of a bad reaction.

If *Alien Module 1: Aslan* is available for use, the Referee is encouraged to make full use of the Reaction rules on page 139. If that book is not to hand, then just roll the Aslan's Intelligence + Tolerance skill, modified as follows:

The characters have an Aslan ally	+2
The characters were somewhat impolite	-1
The characters were rude	-2

If the skill check fails, then the Aslan is sufficiently incensed to react. Depending on the Effect, the Aslan might end the conversation abruptly, throw the characters out, demand a duel, or even launch an attack.

Kasiyl's Advice

Kasiyl can brief the characters on how to approach an Aslan lord, how to properly praise an Aslan's lineage and family holdings, and how to avoid triggering an aggressive response. He also tells the characters to go in armed. Unlike humans, who interpret carrying weapons and armour as an aggressive or inflammatory gesture, not going armed among Aslan is seen as a sign of irrelevance. If you can't defend yourself, you must not be worth attacking.

Notable Ihatei

These four Aslan nobles are the most likely candidates in the camp to attract a 'critical mass' of followers.

Eihei the Clever (Tiykhisto Clan)

An ambitious young Aslan from the expansionist *Tiykhisto* clan, Eihei spent several years exploring the neutral systems in the

Trojan Reach. Most Aslan prefer to take Territory from another clan in ritualised combat instead of colonising new worlds (too slow and lacking in glory) or invading other settled worlds (which is often dangerous, inglorious or politically perilous), so Eihei went in search of planets that were suitable for conquest. With the help of the broker Fyukh, he identified Drinax as an excellent first target. The Aslan previously ignored Drinax as the planet itself is a blasted wasteland with little Territory, but the Floating Palace would make a perfect high-technology staging post for invasions of the trailing sections of Tlaiowaha and the Borderland subsectors.

Playing Eihei:

- Be intelligent, reasonable and cultured. You are a well-travelled Aslan.
- Cautiously evaluate every situation. Fight scientifically.
- Check your armour's computer system and sensors when talking to people. You're more comfortable with high-tech solutions than most of your peers.

Eihei the Clever

Age 24, 2 terms

STR 9 DEX 7 END 8 INT 11 EDU 10 SOC 9

Astrogation 1, Battle Dress 0, Life Science 0, Survival 1, Sensors 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Recon 2, Melee (claw) 1, Independence 2, Engineering 0, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 3, Leadership 2, Persuade 1, Tolerance 1

Combat Armour (17) with grav belt and computer weave, Claw Edging (3d6 melee damage), Gauss Pistol (4d6)

lykhi Too-Eager (*Htyowao* clan): The Htyowao planned to send more warriors to the war on Akoaft, and lykhi would have led these reinforcements. For the last ten years, he trained to lead his clan's forces in a new and glorious offensive against their *Hkaaiheir* rivals. Then came news of the disaster, when the enemy located the secret fortress of the *Htyowao*, and it became clear that the war was lost.

lykhi took his trusted followers and his ship – an 800-ton *Ekawsiykua*-class escort, currently parked in geostationary orbit above the camp – and came to Kteireo. His followers assume that lykhi wants to find a new territory to conquer, but secretly the young warrior just wants a good death. His clan is about to lose its home on Keaih, and that means a long and painful decline into obscurity and eventual destruction. lykhi would rather die gloriously in battle, instead of watching his clan become vassals to some hated foe.

Playing lykhi:

- You're looking for a good death. Get excited about impossible odds and millions-to-one chances.
- Get angry whenever anyone mentions the defeat on Akoaft and what it will mean for your clan.
- Of all the leading *ihatei*, you could be the most charismatic and inspiring, if you were not wallowing in your own death wish.

lykhi

Age 28, 3 terms

STR 13 (19) **DEX** 5 (8) **END** 8 **INT** 7 **EDU** 8 **SOC** 7
Battle Dress 1, Gun Combat (slug rifle) 3, Heavy Weapons 2, Stealth 2, Leadership 2, Tactics (military) 2, Persuade 1, Melee (claw) 1, Recon 2, Tolerance 0
Advanced Battle Dress (19, +6 STR, +3 DEX), Heavy Machine Gun (4d6+4, Auto 8)

Toiho the Brave (Hkaaiheir Clan)

Brash and overconfident, Toiho left the war on Akoaft before it ends. A warrior of his reputation should be in line for Territory on Keaih once the *Hkaaiheir* declare victory, but Toiho decided to waive that Territory and go adventuring. Already, the Aslan bards sing tales of his prowess, and it is likely that this latest gesture is sufficiently heroic and romantic to win him a place in legend. Two Aslan holovision crews follow Toiho around, and his exploits are known even across the Great Rift.

Toiho intends to win glory outside the Hierate, but has not yet decided *where* to plant his claw. He is contemplating the planet of Pourné (Tlaiowaha/0704) – like Keaih, it is a waterworld, so the same terraforming technology owned by his clan can be used, but Pourné has a population of hundreds of millions so conquering *that* will take the full resources of a whole clan. Still, now that all Keaih belongs to the *Hkaaiheir*, they can afford to look to the future...

Playing Toiho:

- You're invincible. Your clan is about to win a glorious victory, which means that you'll soon have all the backing you want to fight a war of your choosing. The galaxy is your prey.
- Condescend to everyone. Make them beg you for favours.
- Look down on everyone.

Toiho

Age 24, 2 terms

STR 9 **DEX** 8 **END** 10 **INT** 8 **EDU** 8 **SOC** 12
Melee (claw) 2, Diplomat 2, Survival 1, Leadership 2, Tactics (military) 2, Recon 1, Battle Dress 1, Gun Combat (energy rifle) 2, Athletics (coordination) 2, Carouse 1, Persuade 2
Advanced Battle Dress (19, +6 STR, +3 DEX), Gravity Spear (2d6, ignores armour)

Old Elyo (No Clan)

Most *ihatei* are aged between 15 and 30; Elyo is at least fifty years old, and every one of those years brought with it many scars. Of the warriors assembled here, he is by far the most experienced and the most skilled, but he is also considered unlucky. For one to have fought for so long and still have no Territory to show for it is shameful. Elyo is an Outcast and so does not have the backing of a clan.

Each night, he calls for an attack on the human planet of Paal. This world was once part of the Empire of Drinax and is a rich agricultural planet, inhabited by humans ruled by superintelligent squid (or so they claim). Paal is indeed a prime target for Aslan attack, and has spent trillions of credits bolstering its defences by purchasing weapons from Vorito and the General Development Company.

Playing Elyo:

- These other *ihatei* are fools – they don't know how hard it is to be landless. You're bitter and angry.
- Don't let the clans manipulate you. Don't let anyone manipulate you. You're tired of being used as a weapon.
- Stand much, much too close to the person you're talking to. Use your physical presence to intimidate them.

Elyo

Age 52, 9 terms

STR 10 **DEX** 6 **END** 8 **INT** 7 **EDU** 8 **SOC** 8
Battle Dress 2, Recon 3, Pilot (small craft) 1, Gun Combat (slug rifles) 4, Melee (claw) 3, Stealth 2, Tactics (military) 2, Leadership 1, Persuade 0
Combat Armour (15), Autorifle (3d6, Auto 4)

Notable Retainers

These two Aslan are not going to lead any warbands, but both have considerable influence on the fortunes of the *ihatei*.

Fyukh (No Clan, Formerly Khyahé)

Fyukh is a landless Aslan. The influential *Khaukheairl* broke the power of Fyukh's clan, the *Khyahé*, in a political skirmish decades ago, so Fyukh lost his former position and was forced to survive on the fringes of Aslan society as an influence peddler and information broker. He advises young *ihatei* on likely targets and deals with logistical problems. He owns the ships that visited Drinax, and he advised Eihei the Clever on the possibility of using Drinax as the staging post for further invasions.

Unlike the *ihatei*, Fyukh is reasonable and capable of compromise. His goals are to make money – unlike most males, Fyukh understands commerce – and to build his power base among the *ihatei*. He dreams of revenge upon the *Khaukheairl*, but has little hope of achieving any form of vengeance.

If confronted about his spying mission to Drinax, then Fyukh freely admits those ships belonged to him. Why deny it? All worlds in the Trojan Reach will one day belong to the Aslan, and the tide of the *ihatei* is unstoppable.

Playing Fyukh:

- Be sneaky and underhanded. You exist on the fringes of society.

- You're a mercenary; if the characters can offer you a better deal, you'll listen.
- You *hate* Teaw and his cursed stuck-up *Khaukheairl* cronies. If you can bring him down, it is worth any price.

Teaw, Agent of the Clans (*Khaukheairl* Clan)

Teaw is officially a representative of the council of clans. His role here is to advise and guide the *ihatei* so they do not interfere with the plans of the Hierate as a whole. The canny old Aslan has been the whip hand on the *ihatei* of this region for many years, and is adept at manipulating the movements of the young warriors to benefit the *Khaukheairl* clan and their vassals.

The coming tide of warriors from the war for Keaih means that Teaw currently wields huge political power. He could divert the *ihatei* to attack one of the other clans, triggering another war for territory within the Hierate, or he could send the horde off to attack a neutral world. Right now, he's waiting for the flood of troops from Akoaft to arrive before making a decision. The 'safe' option is to send the *ihatei* to a largely uninhabited world like Sink (Tlaiowaha/0806) or Fantasy (Tlaiowaha/0808) which would also counter the growing influence of the General Development Company at Vorito (Tlaiowaha/0709) – but he will act according to the best interests of the Hierate, his clan and himself.

Playing Teaw:

- Be diplomatic and pleasant, unlike the angry young Aslan. Be a statesman.
- You are the representative of the entire Hierate. Try to make sure the human intruders do not get themselves killed – they are your guests.
- You're the power behind the throne here; speak softly, but wield your influence as a weapon.

Manipulating Events

The first task for the characters is to prevent an early invasion of Drinax. Currently, two figures advocate an invasion of Drinax (Eihei the Clever and Fyukh), but neither of them has the support to launch such an invasion. Two others (lykhi and Toiho) have the supporters. The characters need to make sure that never the twain ever meet.

How do they do this? There are several possible options:

Diplomacy:

- Persuading any of the Aslan to adopt a different target is possible, but tricky. The difficulty for a Persuade roll starts at Very Difficult (-4), but the Referee should apply Dice Modifiers based on the characters' roleplaying and the nature of the offer. Saying 'please don't attack Drinax' is unlikely to work, but suggesting that Paal might be a better target and offering to help gather intelligence about landing sites might give a +2 DM to the roll.

If the characters don't intercede...

If the players fail to intercede, then here is how events play out. The second wave of troops (consisting mainly of *Htyowao* warriors led by lykhi) arrive from Akoaft. With their support, lykhi decides to ally with Eihei the Clever and launches an attack on Drinax. Meanwhile, Teaw convinces Elyo and Toiho to conquer the worlds of Sink and Fantasy, neither of which have any political sway.

It takes lykhi sixteen weeks to assemble his invasion force. More than three hundred *ihatei* ships containing more than five thousand Aslan warriors jump into the Drinax system. Even if the Floating Palace survives (see Out of Time), then the nascent Empire of Drinax is severely damaged.

- Attacking an Aslan-held planet applies another -2 DM. The *ihatei* will only attack another Aslan world if driven by clan rivalries, or if the clan currently in possession of the world is especially weak.
- The best worlds for the Aslan are habitable garden worlds. Apply DMs to suggestions for conquest based on trade codes as per the sidebar.
- The leading *ihatei* are rivals of each other. If the characters play the major *ihatei* off against each other, it is worth a +1 DM at least.
- However, the *ihatei* also want to be on the winning side. If two or more *ihatei* already support a plan of action, then attempts to persuade others to follow the same tactic have a +2 DM.

Sabotage:

- The characters can delay any *ihatei* migrations by spiking the fuel from the starport. There are numerous chemical compounds that can be added to liquid hydrogen that will either jam the internal plumbing of a jump engine or vastly increase the chance of a misjump. Getting into the starport requires either sneaking in with Stealth or else convincing the outcast family to help – if the characters can guarantee that Utea will not be implicated, the outcasts might welcome a long delay to any *ihatei* migration, as it gives them a captive market for longer.
- Removing one of the *ihatei* from contention through poisoning or some other stratagem could affect the debates in the camps. If Eihei is unable to advocate for the invasion of Drinax, then the risk of an invasion is reduced.
- The characters could also plant evidence to dissuade the *ihatei* from invading. Through Fyukh, they could plant evidence suggesting that Drinax has exceptional powerful defences, or that the Floating Palace is under Imperial protection.
- Similarly, arranging a trap or accident to eliminate one of the *ihatei* could tip the balance.

Trade Codes & Conquest

Agricultural (Ag):	+1
Asteroid (As):	-3
Barren (Ba):	-2
Desert (De):	-1
Fluid Oceans (FI):	-1
Garden (Ga):	+3
High Population (Hi):	-1
High Technology (Ht):	+1
Ice Capped (Ic):	-1
Industrial (In):	+1
Low Population (Lo):	+1
Low Technology (Lt):	+0
Non-Agricultural (Na):	+0
Non-Industrial (Ni):	+0
Poor (Po):	-2
Rich (Ri):	+2
Water World (Wa):	+0
Vacuum (Va):	-1

Violence:

- Assassination is common among the Aslan. While it is polite to inform your enemies that you intend to murder them, the player characters could be rather rude and just assassinate, say, Lykhi or Eihei without any forewarning.
- More ambitious players could try an attack on the whole camp. The characters are outgunned several hundred times over, but they could try smuggling a nuclear weapon or some other weapon of mass destruction into the camp, or trigger an ice-slide with mining charges.
- Another option is to attack one of the *ihatei* and frame another. Tensions between the *Htyowao* and the *Hkaarheir* are already running hot; one little incident could tip the balance.

If the characters successfully engineer events so that Drinax is not attacked this year, then they have won a partial victory in this adventure.

All these solutions, though, are just temporary measures. Stopping the current crop of *ihatei* from Drinax may save the Floating Palace for a few years, but when the war ends on Akoaft and one of the clans has to leave Keaih, there will be *millions* of displaced territory-hungry Aslan looking across the border. If the characters want to find a permanent solution, they'll need to head deeper into the Hierate.

4. ESCALATION

On the rimward side of Tlaiowaha subsector lie two worlds – the heavily populated water-world of Keaih (Tlaiowaha/0210)

Kasiyl's Advice

Kasiyl suggests that the characters look to the future. Deflecting the Aslan attack towards an enemy of the player characters could benefit both the *ihatei* and Drinax. Hilfer, for example, is a Law Level 10 planet with no love for pirates. If the characters could push the Aslan towards Hilfer's open deserts, then some faction more amiable towards reunification with Drinax might replace the repressive government. Perhaps the characters could even come to the rescue in a few years, heroically driving out the Aslan horde once the claws of the cats are blunted on the armies of Hilfer.

and the barren rock called Akoaft (Tlaiowaha/0308). These two worlds are intimately linked – the result of the decade-long war on Akoaft determines which clan gets to stay on Keaih. The losers must leave, and their migration will inevitable trigger a wave of invasions and bloodshed.

Right now, the Aslan believe the war to be effectively over. The *Hkaaiheir* need only mop up the last few *Htyowao* troops and declare victory. If only the *Htyowao* could hold out for another few months, they would then be allowed to bring in reinforcements and prolong the war for another decade or more.

Plotting a Course

The characters can either take a direct route to Akoaft by following the Aslan border rimward, or they can jump back out of the Hierate and skirt down the independent systems, passing through the old Kingdom of Drinax and then into GDC territory around Vorito.

Heading to Keaih means delving deep into the Hierate, and passing through fortress systems like Tlaiowaha and Tyokh. If the characters have a negative Standing with the Hierate, they must dodge patrols and customs cutters as they travel. Many of these systems contain Aslan naval bases, and the full power of the Hierate is evident as multi-thousand ton warships and capital ships prowl past.

Keaih

A ring of orbital construction stations surrounds Keaih. Asteroids tumble towards the planet, nudged by grav-plates planted by miners. Soon, these asteroids will be hollowed-out and turned into colony ships, to carry millions of Aslan from the *Htyowao* clan away from the seas of their ancestors and out across the stars. Some may find a place elsewhere in Tlaiowaha subsector, but others will inevitably spill over the border. Millions more will change allegiance, giving up their claims of territory and becoming lower-ranking members of the victorious *Hkaairheir* clan.

While Keaih is at the heart of the problem facing Drinax, the characters gain little from visiting this world. Getting an audience with either Hkaairheirko or Htyowaoko (the leader of a clan is designated by the suffix '-ko') is virtually impossible for a human visitor (Social Standing + Diplomat, Impossible (-8)). The characters can easily learn about the political situation on the planet and the importance of Akoaft, but they have no leverage here.

Unlike the wild *ihatei* camp or the war-world of Akoaft, Keaih is a civilised world by Aslan standards, with plenty of System Defense Boats and warships. If the characters cause trouble here, they may bring down the vengeance of two clans upon themselves.

Akoaft

Blowing up Akoaft is about the only reasonable use for this chunk of rock. The dense, tainted atmosphere means that the native biosphere is completely hostile to Aslan biochemistry. Every living thing on the planet is deadly poison. The world was designated as the site for a proxy battle between the two clans a decade ago.

Both clans adopted a similar strategy. They dug fortresses linked by tunnels to protect their troops from the lethal surface environment. Troops wearing environmental protection armour try to find the entrances to enemy tunnels by crossing through the perilous slime tunnels. The rules of war prohibit the use of orbital or aerial assets, so it has been a war of tanks and infantry and bloody tunnel fighting.

The Akoaft system consists of nine other worlds, including two bloated gas giants. The system is out of bounds to visitors, so any ship that jumps in is told to refuel at the gas giant Khufu and then jump out again. Landing on Akoaft means running a blockade of Aslan interceptors (mostly 800-ton *Ekawsiykua*-class escorts).

Currently in orbit of Akoaft are more than twenty thousand Aslan warriors. Under the original terms of the 'strictly limited war' (*tehlaicho*), both sides would be permitted to deploy reinforcements if the war lasted longer than ten years. These warriors do not expect to be deployed at this stage, as the war is about to be won by the *Hkaairheir* within the time limit. The uncertain future of the *ihatei* lies before them.

Prolonging the War

Possible options for prolonging the war include:

- **Piracy & Kidnapping:** The arbiter of the war, Yae, intends to leave Akoaft before the actual conclusion so he can preside over the ceremony of victory on Keaih. As a neutral arbiter, he travels in his own ship, a *Ktiyhui*-class 200-ton courier. If the characters could intercept and capture that ship, they could:

- Plant evidence or force a confession, suggesting that Yae gave the location of the *Htyowao* fortress to their enemies
- Prevent Yae from attending the ceremony, which means that the war lasts more than ten years, which means that the *Htyowao* could then send in reinforcements
- Kill Yae, disrupting the ceremony and throwing the status of Keaih into doubt.

- **Helping the *Htyowao*:** The *Htyowao* nearly held the line. If it were not for the unfortunate discovery of their fortress, they would have kept the war to a stalemate. The characters could intercede on their behalf, either subtly or overtly. They could:
 - Smuggle weapons past the blockade
 - Raid *Hkaairheir* supply ships, leaving them unable to deliver a final crushing blow to end the war.
 - Use ship's sensors to find the *Hkaairheir* headquarters, then relay that information to the *Htyowao* forces.
- **Using the *Ihatei*:** A poetic solution might be to use the *ihatei* at Kteiroa to prolong the war. If the characters could convince Iykhi to give up his honour for the sake of his clan, or convinced Teaw that an Aslan/human conflict is not in the best interest of the Hierate, then they might be able to divert the flood of landless warriors back to the conflict on Akoaft.

Out of Time

Should the characters fail to find a solution to the threat of the *ihatei*, then Drinax and the other systems in the coreward portion of the subsector will come under repeated Aslan attack. These attacks should not be powerful enough to conquer the Floating Palace (or else the campaign would end prematurely), but the threat of Aslan raiders will make future adventures in the campaign more dangerous, and reduce the assistance available from Drinax.

WORLDS OF THE REACH

Khusai

Home to the naval base of the belligerent *Hrakoea*, Khusai is a pleasant world of blue fields and purple forests. Aslan legend claims that giant rock monsters dwell in underground caverns on this planet, but others say these rumours were started deliberately to conceal weapons testing. The orbiting base is a major Aslan fortification and is commonly used by pirate hunters.

Patron: Hunter Syas

Reward: Cr. 5,000 per pirate, Cr. 50,000 per ship

Mission: As Guardian of Trade, Syas' duty is to hunt down

and destroy pirates. She pays handsomely for any information that leads directly to the capture and death of enemies of the Hierate. Syas is especially interested in locating the legendary planet Theev – and then blasting it from orbit.

Akoaft

Famed for its toxic atmosphere, lethal plant life and general hostility, Akoaft has found its niche as an arena for wargames and limited conflicts. From orbit, the planet is strangely beautiful, as orange and pink algae blooms cover whole continents. Up close, it's a slime swamp.

Patron: Taofel the Scholarly

Reward: Cr. 20,000

Mission: A scientist from the *Hkaairheir* clan, Taofel spent the last six years researching a bio-modification that would allow the Aslan liver to process the toxins contained in the native slimes of Akoaft. The clan stopped funding his research when the tide of the war changed, but Taofel is determined to solve the problem. He wants the characters to locate a patch of rare lichen. The lichen was reported by several warriors to soothe the pain caused by slime exposure, but the territory containing the lichen has since fallen into *Htyowao* hands.

Kteiroa

This icy planet is home to a family of Outcasts, and they have made it into the largest *ihatei* camp in the subsector. The importance of Kteiroa is likely to grow as more *ihatei* come in search of followers and territory.

Patron: Utea .

Reward: Kteiroa moves one step towards becoming a Haven.

Mission: The *ihatei* need weapons – and Utea knows where to get them. There's an Aslan world called Oiwoiiea, ruled by the *Ahroay'if* trading clan. One of their holdings is a weapons factory, and Utea managed to steal the route of a planned shipment. The weapons are aboard a 600-ton *Khtukhao*-class transport, and are bound for the markets at Tlaiowaha. As the transport is limited to jump-2, this means it will take a circuitous route along the border, and will even pass through the Kteiroa system. The transport is part of a convoy guarded by escort ships, but if the characters could steal the weapons, then Utea would fence them at a very favourable rate.

However, Utea's information is only partially accurate. The weapons are not bound for Tlaiowaha – the *Ahroay'if* intend to sell weapons to human worlds like Hilfer and Paal along the border. They intend to profit from the threat posed by their Aslan cousins.

Keaih

The cities of Keaih are invisible from orbit. Each city is built on an artificial island, and at the edge of these islands are cyclopean

barriers heated by fusion reactors. These barriers heat the sea into steam, so every city is at the centre of a gigantic ring of super-heated steam. Every year, the barriers are pushed out a little further, and the atmosphere grows a little thicker.

Patron: Takhweirl of the Company of Profits That Rise Like Mist

Reward: Shipping contract.

Mission: Takhweirl is an Aslan female who runs a trading company out of Keiah. While she comes from a relatively modest background, she has impressed the clan leaders with her ambition and talent as a trader, and has access to the court of Hkaairheirko. Her next goal is to bypass the chokehold on trade enforced by the *Tlioawaha* clan. Currently, almost all trade has to go through their port on Tlioawaha.

Takhweirl has a cargo of heavily restricted Aslan biochemical used in terraforming. She intends to sell them to the government of Albe, an Imperial protectorate in the Sindal subsector. Her buyers wait for her on the backwater world of Homestead, also in Sindal. She wants the characters to smuggle her cargo across the border and deliver it to Homestead. To protect her goods, she wants to send a detachment of Aslan warriors with the cargo.

In exchange, she offers a shipping contract with the Company of Profits That Rise Like Mist. This contract involves shipping roughly 1,000 tons of cargo between Keaih and Vorito every month, at a rate of 2,200 Credits/ton. In addition, the contract comes with documents of passage, letting the characters operate openly within the Hierate.

Tyokh

Tyokh is a shipping hub for the Hierate, especially for ships coming in along the trade route from the Imperium. Thousands of ships crowd the skies above the port – merchants, escorts, tenders, scouts, system defence boats, and sometimes even brave pirates. Tyokh is perhaps the most 'human' world in the Hierate. It could almost be part of the Imperium, if you close your eyes and ignore the distant roars of the jungle beasts.

The alleyways of Tyokh are home to the *Rea'a Hrillkhir* criminal syndicate, a mysterious and influential band of criminal Outcasts. The *Rea'a Hrillkhir* controls pirate bands, black markets and other illicit activity across the subsector.

Patron: The Alley Cat

Reward: Access to the *Rea'a Hrillkhir* black market

Mission: Capture a dustspice freighter.

The Alley Cat is – or claims to be – the leader of the *Rea'a Hrillkhir*. If the characters are to carry out pirate attacks in Aslan space, they will need allies. Investigations with Streetwise reveal that the Alley Cat wants dustspice, a spice popular in

many Aslan cuisines. While synthetic dustspice is widely available, true connoisseurs prefer natural spice imported from the Imperium. The Alley Cat intends to poison a shipment of natural spice with an undetectable slow-acting poison, then blackmail the wealthy Aslan who eat it.

If the characters can capture a shipment of dustspice, the Alley Cat will give them access to her black markets. Dust-spice is imported by an Aslan megacorporation called *Tyeyo Fteahrao Yolr*. They use fast, well-armed freighters to swiftly cross the Trojan Reach before heading towards the J5 route across the Great Rift and the hungry markets of the core Hierate worlds.

Access to the Black Markets means the characters can fence stolen goods at a rate of 20% at any Aslan port.

Iroioah

Iroioah is a dying world. Some ancient calamity stripped away more than two-thirds of its atmosphere, and now the planet's seas are dry and its continents are graveyards. The howling winds carry blue sandstorms across the copper sulphide-tinged deserts. Iroioah was once home to an advanced spacefaring civilisation that flourished in the interval between the last war of the Ancients and the rise of the Vilani. Some of their ruins still survive.

The Hierate has little interest in the deeds of dead races, but a small team continues to search the ruins for still-functioning technological devices.

Patron: The Nameless Keeper

Reward: Relief from the psionic dream assault

Mission: The characters are telepathically contacted by an ancient defence mechanism – a psionic construct called the Nameless Keeper. It can only contact the minds of those touched by the Ancients, so it cannot affect the Aslan. Human or Vargr player characters, though, are vulnerable to its attacks. The Keeper demands the characters re-open a temple buried deep beneath the sands of Iroioah and activate a mysterious device there. It claims that doing so will drive the meddling Aslan away from the tombs of Iroioah. If they refuse to help, it will torment them with dreams until they go mad.

In fact, the device is the generator for the psionic construct. The original inhabitants were wiped out by a plague, but they built a psionic weapon that would copy their minds into the host bodies of other sophonts, resurrecting their empire once Iroioah was found once again. They placed this construct in a tomb guarded with elaborate traps and defence systems. Over the millennia, the construct decayed, and now lacks the power to seize control of victims. It can only torment them. If the characters follow its instructions and fight their way through the tomb's automated guardians, the construct will then try to trick them into repairing its generator and then seize control of their bodies.

